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ON THE LEFT

The establishment of so-called "counter-universities" by the student-led New Left was front-page news to the *New York Times* December 12. This excellent report, by Peter Bart, notes that at least seven such schools have been started, in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Austin, Gainesville (Florida) and Palo Alto (California). They are so named "to signify their rejection of all that ordinary universities stand for"—not only the usual trappings like accreditation, campus, and the grant of degrees, but also and more significantly the routine university curriculum. Typically, "counter-universities" consist of nothing more than a gathering of disaffected students and professors to hold a few offbeat or Marxist courses of their own choosing. The Free University of New York, for example, offers such subjects as "Life in Mainland China Today," "Hallucinogenic Drugs: Uses and Social Implications," and "Search for the Authentic Sexual Experience."

The "counter-universities" are definitely products of the New Left, although they are in some ways modeled after Communist training schools, and routinely have Communist sponsors and teachers. Among the endorsers of the New Left School in Los Angeles are Theodore Edwards, local chairman of the (Trotskyite) Socialist Workers Party, and Dorothy Healey, chairman of the Communist Party of Southern California. Milt Rosen, chairman of the Peking-oriented Progressive Labor Party, is on the faculty of the Free University of New York. Generally, however, the schools reflect the New Left bias against formal Communist Party ties, preferring casual intermingling in civil rights or anti-war groups, or in the vanguard organization of the New Left, Students for a Democratic Society. (SDS operates one of the "counter-universities" itself—the New School in San Francisco—and is working to cross-pollinate the others.

FUF (the Free University of Florida) was established in Gainesville by a group called the Freedom Forum, which describes itself, fairly, as an "umbrella organ for Leftist

student groups at the University of Florida." Freedom Forum claims authorship of nine campus groups, such as civil rights groups and a political party, and affiliations with no fewer than 18 state and national organizations, including SDS, the May 2nd Movement (youth arm of PLP), SNCC, Berkeley's Free Speech Movement, the National Committee to Abolish HUAC, and—interestingly enough—the U.S. National Student Association. All of the Freedom Forum campus groups share a common headquarters (in a ramshackle house off campus) and roughly the same membership. The same students active in the Freedom Forum structure make up the student body of the FUF. The acting chancellor and guiding hand of the FUF is Edward Richer, faculty adviser to many of the Freedom Forum groups until he was fired by the U. of Florida, *it* says for incompetence, *he* says for his Marxist views. Among the important matters discussed, when the FUF was in the planning stage, were the introduction of several respectable courses to be dropped after the school got on firm footing, the possible use of FUF tuitions in Freedom Forum activities, a respectable image for faculty security, drafting "nice-word" descriptions of the FUF to lure U. of Fla. faculty into participating, and the procurement of nude models for an art course. According to a FUF bulletin, courses are being offered on "Cuba Today," "Perennial Endemic Rebellion," "Mathematics as a Culture Cue." One on birth control is being considered. Richer managed to get the FUF chartered as a tax-exempt institution under the laws of Florida, to the disgust of several state legislators.